

HOCKEY TRAINING PUCKS AND METHODS OF USING SAME

Reference to Related Application

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[0001] This application claims the benefit of United States provisional patent application Serial No. 60/448,877 filed 24 February 2003.

Technical Field

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[0002] This application relates to hockey pucks modified for training purposes and methods of using same.

Background

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[0003] Training aids for sports requiring hand-eye coordination are known in the prior art. United States patent No. 5,711,725, Bengtson, issued January 27, 1998 relates to a practice baseball or softball having contrasting colors. Approximately one half of the outer surface of the ball is a dark color and the other half of the ball is white to make the ball more difficult to see than a standard ball. When used for practice, the ball requires players to concentrate intensely in order to hit or field the ball successfully because of the difficulty in seeing it clearly. During games when a light colored ball is used, it is much more visible and players are able to hit and field it better since they are used to practicing with a two colored practice ball.

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[0004] United States Patent No. 5,607,152, Strassburger, issued March 4, 1997 similarly a baseball batter training aid which includes a plurality of baseballs each having different colored indicia on the outer surface. The baseball batter is required to recognize and identify the color of the indicia after the baseball is pitched, causing the batter to focus on the ball as it is delivered by the pitcher toward the hitting zone.

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[0005] Other baseball training aids employing balls having surface markings are described in United States Patent No. 2,925,273, Pratt,

issued February 16, 1960 and Patent No. 4,991,838, Groves, issued February 12, 1991.

5 [0006] United States Patent No. 4,170,352, Vcala, issued October 9, 1979, relates to a visual aid practice tennis ball. The ball has panels colored of contrasting colors for indicating the spin or rotation of the ball while in flight. This enables players and coaches to more easily discern the spin imparted to the ball to facilitate learning of delivery and receiving manoeuvres.

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[0007] Surface markings are also known on other types of sporting balls including croquet (US Patent No. 280,807 dated July 10, 1883); golf (US Patent No. 676,506 dated June 18, 1901); soccer (US Design Patent No. Des. 263,491 dated March 23, 1982); and beach volleyball (US 15 Design Patent No. 421,470 dated March 7, 2000).

[0008] Practice hockey pucks are known in the prior art for improving passing and shooting skills as well as goaltending skills. International application No. WO 93/20910, Bigornia et al., published 20 October 28, 1993 describes a hockey puck having a hollow body that may be filled with removable material to change the puck's weight for practice purposes. Additionally, a number of linear markings may be applied to the surfaces and edges of the puck to allow the user to monitor and analyze the spin of the puck. The optical guidelines can be 25 used to compare and contrast different types of shots, such as wristshots, slapshots, backhands and snap-shots

[0009] United States Patent No. 5,184,820, Keating et al., issued February 9, 1993 relates to a hockey puck which, in one embodiment, 30 may include a ring or band of material of a color differing from the remainder of the puck about the periphery of the puck. The band may include a pigment added to it to give it a fluorescent color, such as orange or green. The band is intended to provide a higher visibility of

the puck, for both the players and fans. Keating et al. contemplates that the primary color of the puck will be regulation black.

[0010] The prior art does not, however, teach the desirability of using hockey pucks having a light colored background (and which are therefore more difficult to see against a white ice surface). The need has therefore arisen for modified hockey pucks adapted for improving the hand-eye coordination and concentration of both skaters and goaltenders.

Summary of Invention

[0011] In accordance with the invention a kit comprising a plurality of hockey pucks for training purposes is provided. At least some of the pucks in the kit each comprise a first outer portion having a relatively light color and a second outer portion having a relatively dark color. The kit is configured such that the relative size of the first and second outer portions differs in at least some of said pucks.

[0012] In one embodiment the relatively dark second outer portion may be on a flat surface of at least some of the pucks, such as the circular upper surface or the circular lower surface, or both. In this embodiment the second outer portion may be circular. In another embodiment the second outer portion is on a curved side edge of at least some of said pucks. In this embodiment the second outer portion may be annular. The kit may also include one or more pucks having outer surfaces which are entirely said light color.

[0013] In one embodiment, the relatively light color is white and said relatively dark color is black. In another embodiment, the light color is light grey and said dark color is dark grey. In the latter embodiment the light grey or dark grey color may cover the entire outer surface of the puck.

[0014] The invention also relates to a hockey puck derived from the kit. Alternatively, the puck may be sold and used separate from the kit, the puck having a first outer portion having a relatively light color and a second outer portion having a relatively dark color as described above.

[0015] The invention also relates to method of training a hockey player comprising:

- (a) providing a kit of hockey pucks as described above;
- (b) selecting from the kit a subgroup of one or more of the pucks each having a relatively small first outer portion and a relatively large second outer portion;
- (c) allowing the player to use the one or more pucks during one or more training sessions until the player becomes accustomed to using the one or more pucks;
- (d) selecting from the kit a further subgroup of one or more pucks at least some of which have a larger first outer portion and a smaller second outer portion in comparison to the pucks previously selected; and
- (e) repeating steps (c) and (d) such that the player becomes accustomed to training with pucks having progressively larger second outer portions and progressively smaller second outer portions.

[0016] The method may further include the step of selecting from the kit at least one puck having outer surfaces which are entirely said light color.

[0017] In one embodiment of the method goaltenders may be trained using pucks where the first and second portions are located on a curved side edge of said pucks and non-goaltenders (i.e. skaters) may be trained using pucks wherein said first and second portions are
5 located on a flat upper surface or lower surface of said puck, or both of said upper and lower surfaces.

[0018] The method of the invention is improving the ability of a hockey player to visualize the location of a hockey puck during a
10 hockey game by using pucks configured in accordance with the invention during training sessions.

Brief Description of Drawings

15 [0019] In drawings which illustrate embodiments of the invention, but which should not be construed as restricting the spirit or scope of the invention in any way,

[0020] Figure 1A - 1E are a series of plan views of hockey pucks in
20 accordance with the invention having a progressively smaller dark portion on their flat surfaces.

[0021] Figure 2A - 2F are a series of end elevational views of hockey
25 pucks in accordance with the invention having a progressively smaller dark portion on their curved side surfaces.

[0022] Figure 3 is an isometric view of the puck of Figure 1B.

[0023] Figure 4A is an isometric view of an alternative embodiment
30 of the invention having an entirely light grey outer surface.

[0024] Figure 4B is an isometric view of an alternative embodiment of the invention having an entirely dark grey outer surface.

Description

[0025] Throughout the following description, specific details are set forth in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the invention.

5 However, the invention may be practiced without these particulars. In other instances, well known elements have not been shown or described in detail to avoid unnecessarily obscuring the invention. Accordingly, the specification and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative, rather than a restrictive, sense.

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[0026] Training in the sport of hockey requires individual and team practice to master numerous skills. Such skills include skating, passing, stick-handling, shooting, checking and positional play. In the case of goaltenders shot blocking techniques are also important. A core skill
15 necessary to play effective hockey is the ability to visually perceive the puck and quickly identify its location and path of travel. The present invention is designed to help hockey players develop their visual perception and concentration skills during training sessions to improve game play.

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[0027] Regulation hockey pucks are ordinarily black in color (apart from team logos or other printed indicia). In the Applicant's invention the training pucks are regulation size and weight, but they are partially or entirely white (or some other light color or non-black color). The pucks
25 may be sold as a kit to allow coaches and players to select pucks which are progressively more difficult to see against a light colored background, such as an ice surface.

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[0028] In one embodiment of the invention shown in Figures 1A - 1E and 3 each training puck 10 is entirely or partially white or some other light color on its upper and lower flat circular surfaces 12. For example, the upper and lower surfaces 12 may include a first relatively light outer portion 14 around the periphery of surfaces 12 and a relatively dark outer portion 16 located in a central portion of surfaces 12. As used in this patent

application, the word "outer" refers to an exterior surface of puck 10 visible to users. In the illustrated embodiment, dark portion 16 is circular in shape, although other shapes and patterns could be substituted. The relative size of light and dark portions 14, 16 varies as shown in Figures 1A - 1E. For example, the diameter of the dark portion 16 is much smaller in the puck of Figure 1D than in the puck of Figure 1A. The diameter of dark portion 16 may range, for example, from 12 mm to 50 mm. In the puck of Figure 1E the entire outer surface of the puck is light in color.

10 [0029] In the illustrated embodiment the dark color is black and the light color is white. However, other colors light and dark colors could be substituted without departing from the invention.

15 [0030] In use, players use training pucks 10 in practice sessions. For example, according to one training method, players could begin by using a puck 10 with a relatively large dark portion 16 (e.g. 50 mm in diameter). After they become accustomed to such a training puck 10, a puck 10 with a smaller diameter dark portion 16 could be substituted (e.g. 37 mm in diameter). This process would continue until pucks 10 with very small dark portions 16 (e.g. 25 mm or 12 mm in diameter) were used. Finally, a completely white puck 10 as shown in Figure 1E could be used. As will be apparent to a person skilled in the art, the smaller the size of the dark portions 16, the more difficult the puck 10 will be to see on the white ice surface. Thus, by using the training pucks 10 of the Applicant's invention, 20 players are required to increase their levels of concentration and visualization due to the decreased visibility of training pucks 10. When the players then revert to using regulation black pucks during hockey games they are able to stick handle and pass the puck with enhanced ability and accuracy.

25 [0031] Another embodiment of the invention is illustrated in Figures 30 2A - 2F. In this embodiment the same principles may be employed except that the dark portions 16 of varying size are applied to the curved circumferential side surface 20 of puck 10 rather than flat top and bottom surfaces 20. In this embodiment, dark marking 16 may be in the shape of an annular stripe although other shapes or patterns could be substituted.

The thickness of dark marking 16 may vary, for example, from about 15 mm to 3 mm. As in the first embodiment, an entirely white (or other light-colored) puck 1p could also be used to minimize visibility (Figure 2F).

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[0032] The training pucks 10 of Figures 2A - 2F are primarily intended for in training goaltenders whereas the pucks 10 of Figures 1A - 1E is primarily intended for use in training "skaters" (i.e. forwards or defencemen). In both cases, the ability to visually perceive a fast moving puck and react accordingly is critical to effective play.

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[0033] The training pucks 10 described above could sold or used separately or as part of a training kit comprising multiple pucks 10 of varying appearance.

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[0034] In other embodiments of the invention, the training pucks 10 may be entirely light grey or dark grey in color for training purposes as shown in Figures 4A and 4B. Once again, such pucks are intended to be less visible on an ice surface than conventional regulation pucks and hence are capable of providing a training effect when used in practice sessions.

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[0035] Pucks 10 may also potentially be used for training players on non-ice surfaces, particularly in the case of roller hockey or street hockey. As will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art, other colors could be selected depending on the color of the rink or other surface used for training purposes.

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[0036] As will be apparent to those skilled in the art in the light of the foregoing disclosure, many alterations and modifications are possible in the practice of this invention without departing from the spirit or scope thereof. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is to be construed in accordance with the substance defined by the following claims.

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